

The Sugar-Coated Script: A Quantitative Analysis of Young Adults' Cognitive Awareness of Benevolent Sexism in Viral Social Media Trends

Meswa Sukhadiya

Pandit Deendayal Energy University, India

Abstract

The present research examines young adults' (18-25) cognitive awareness and psychological internalisation of the phenomenon of modern-day "benevolent sexism," which is embedded in highly infectious social media trends, such as "girl math," "passenger princess," and "I am just a girl." Whereas hostile sexism is considered unacceptable among younger people, benevolent sexism, masked by extremely artistic, entertaining digital microtrends, penetrates through the cognitive filters and reinforces messages about female dependency, absence of skills and intelligence, and uncertainty in themselves. It should be acknowledged that although a large number of modern young adults have progressive and egalitarian attitudes regarding gender equality, they still engage with this sort of content and make it viral via numerous social networks, like TikTok and Instagram. The primary objective of the present research, representing an empirical gap within the scholarly literature, is to investigate the impact of digital microtrends on the formation of benevolent sexist attitudes concerning the self-reliance and competency of women. A quantitative cross-sectional survey (N=300) will be used, together with the ambivalent sexism inventory and multiple regression analysis. Expected findings will indicate a very strong correlation between higher levels of trend involvement and low levels of explicit awareness of the underlying patriarchal messages that are usually brushed off as innocent and humorous. Overall, this study provides a much-needed update to Glick and Fiske's ambivalent sexism theory within the dynamic Web 2.0 algorithmic context and forms the basis for media literacy programs, career counselling, and feminist activism efforts aimed at empowering young people.

Keywords: Benevolent Sexism; Social Media Trends; Young Adults; Cognitive Awareness; Female Autonomy